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BAUCUS, RANGEL COMMENT ON TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

Committee chairmen want any fast-track renewal to address Americans' trade concerns

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) commented today on the future of Trade Promotion Authority – also known as “fast-track” negotiating authority – which gives trade agreements negotiated by a U.S. administration expedited consideration in Congress. It is widely expected that President George W. Bush will call this week for a renewal of “fast-track” before its congressional authorization expires on June 30 of this year. Together, they called today for legislative changes that will ensure job creation under fast-track, and more protections for U.S. workers and businesses through trade enforcement, congressional consultation, and labor and environmental provisions.

“Fast-track negotiating authority is vital to U.S. trade, but it can be a stronger tool to create the jobs and economic prosperity our families deserve,” said Baucus. **“I see reauthorization as an opportunity to address Americans’ legitimate concerns on trade, with more vigorous enforcement of laws and agreements, greater congressional consultation – so we can fight for workers and businesses back home – and better labor and environmental standards. Improving Trade Adjustment Assistance for the times when trade has negative effects must be part of the conversation as well.”**

“Trade negotiating authority is a valuable tool for the Administration, but it requires a great deal of trust, and Congress must have some key assurances before it is willing to extend this leverage,” said Rangel. **“Congress must be an active partner in trade negotiations to ensure we are truly crafting trade agreements in the best interest of the American people and that we are enforcing trade laws to hold our trading partners accountable. We need to maintain the best workforce in the world to compete in today's global marketplace, and that means we must provide workers with portable skills and benefits to keep them employed and, when absolutely necessary, to provide effective transitions to new jobs.”**

Baucus and Rangel’s congressional committees hold jurisdiction over all U.S. trade policy.

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